Why Your Clean Apps Disagree About Laundry Detergent

4 published rules in 60 seconds, plus a 5-minute routine for the store aisle

This sheet doesn't list any app's scores or grades. Look the bottle up yourself, then use these rules to work out **why** the results differ. First, coverage: **Yuka** doesn't analyze household cleaning products,[5] **Think Dirty** covers only a small selection of household items,[7] and **EWG** grades cleaners A–F in a separate guide, not on Skin Deep's 1–10 scale.[1]

1 EWG grades cleaners its own way

- Letter grade A–F from ingredient hazards *plus* disclosure.[2]
- Weights how you're exposed (breathing a spray vs. touching a liquid).[2]
- Drops acute, concentration-dependent hazards when the amount is too low; never drops chronic ones.[2]
- Adjusts for pH, VOCs and regulatory status.[2]

So: don't read a detergent grade like a Skin Deep number.

2 Disclosure is part of the grade

- **EWG:** points for listing ingredients on the label, website and safety data sheet; "fragrance" counts as non-specific.[2]
- **EWG:** fewer than 4 ingredients listed halves the disclosure score; a high hazard score can't be offset by good disclosure.[2]
- **Think Dirty:** any product listing "fragrance" is rated 7 or higher.[6]

So: similar formulas can grade differently because of what's published.

3 Enzymes: a worker-safety flag

- **EWG:** enzymes group is "some concern" for asthma and breathing, based on studies of factory workers.[3]
- **EWG:** no evidence consumers using enzyme cleaners are at risk; enzyme products often add a stabilizer like boric acid.[4]

So: skipping enzymes? Look for protease, amylase, lipase, mannanase, cellulase.

4 "Free & clear" vs. essential oils

- **EWG:** free & clear is a better bet, but a few may contain a masking scent; essential oils aren't automatically safe; optical brighteners can be irritating; "natural" and "non-toxic" aren't regulated.[4]
- **Think Dirty:** named oils are rated as their own ingredients, not as "fragrance".[6]

So: "no synthetic fragrance" isn't the same as unscented.

5-minute referee routine

1. **Read the label first:** fragrance/parfum, essential oils, enzymes (and boric acid), brighteners, preservatives, full list printed?
2. **Check coverage:** expect no Yuka result and patchy Think Dirty coverage; search EWG's cleaners guide.
3. **Find the driver:** is EWG's grade pulled down by a hazard or by missing disclosure?
4. **Name the rule:** route/concentration (1), disclosure or "fragrance" (2), enzymes (3), essential oils (4).
5. **Decide what matters to you:** sensitive skin or asthma at home may make scent and enzyme flags count more.

Label checklist

- ☐ Full ingredient list printed or online
- ☐ No "fragrance" or "parfum"
- ☐ Essential oils or limonene listed?
- ☐ Enzymes listed? Boric acid?
- ☐ Optical brighteners?
- ☐ Preservatives (e.g. isothiazolinones)
- ☐ "Natural" / "non-toxic": unregulated words

Sources (read Nov. 3, 2026): 1. EWG apps FAQ, ewg.org/apps/faq 2. EWG Guide to Healthy Cleaning, how cleaners are scored, ewg.org/cleaners/content/scoring 3. EWG cleaners, enzymes substance group, ewg.org/cleaners/substance_groups/188-Enzymes 4. EWG cleaners, decoding labels, ewg.org/cleaners/content/decoding_labels 5. Yuka Help, household cleaning products, help.yuka.io 6. Think Dirty methodology, thinkdirtyapp.com/methodology 7. Think Dirty FAQs, thinkdirtyapp.com/faqs

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